

Palestine.

Arab Opinion.

Arab Activity in Palestine

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The following, dated early January, is from an Arab source in Jerusalem, who is well qualified to assess trends in Arab opinion.

(i) Unbiased persons in Jerusalem feel that the disagreement apparent (despite optimistic press reports) between the Mufti and the Arab States is unlikely to be resolved with full satisfaction to either party. Some of the more reasonable demands of the Mufti, particularly if they tend to further practical results for the Arab cause, may be met; in his opposition to King Abdullah the Mufti is considered likely to receive at least secret support from Syria and the Lebanon.

The Mufti.

(ii) Meanwhile His Eminence's supporters in Palestine have been assiduously trying to cultivate an impression in the public mind of great activity on the Mufti's part, which will ensure success for the Arabs. Nevertheless, according to our correspondent, opinion early in January was cast down at the continued disagreement between Haj Amin and the Arab countries; a state of affairs for which the former is being blamed more and more openly. It is widely felt that the States are right in making their own conditions as to the form of their probably decisive help; the Mufti, on the other hand, is regarded as wrong when, instead of placing his leadership at the disposal of the Arab States, he insists on the right to choose the overall military commander and on exercising full freedom of action himself.

(iii) The much publicized presence in Palestine of Abdul Qadir Husayni (the Mufti's choice as guerrilla "C-in-C") has not impressed the Arab public very greatly. Abdul Qadir, it is felt, has not acted as a large-scale leader should in secretly moving from village to village with some 50 followers. Such tactics (reminiscent of those employed in the disturbances which ended in 1938) are considered poor support for Haj Amin's desire to show by Abdul Qadir's presence that he himself can if necessary take up the full leadership of the "national movement", without the assistance of the Arab Governments.

An Arab Government.

(iv) The recent announcement that the Mufti intended to form a "representative" Arab Government for Palestine has been received with little enthusiasm. Many Arabs in Palestine have been asking whether this step was taken with the approval of the Arab Governments, or whether it represents a defiance of these by the Mufti, as a culmination to his disagreement with

Arab Government

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... which his Government contemplates giving to his new Government and its institutions. It is widely felt that the basis of the system (the National Committee) is made up almost wholly of Haj Amin's supporters, chosen by Sheikh Hassan Abu Sa'ud. As a result of these considerations, opinion is stated to have swung towards the Arab States and away from the Mufti.

Finance.

(v) In addition, the public is reported to have come to the conclusion that the Mufti has not the means with which to carry out his plans. The sums recently raised by the Mufti's agents in Palestine, which the highest estimates had put at some £.P.60,000, are regarded as of little importance in comparison with the figures ten times greater being contributed to the Arab cause in neighbouring countries. Moreover, according to the staff of the Jerusalem Office of the Arab Higher Executive, the total collected in the country as a result of the recent drive by the Mufti's men did not in fact exceed £.P.40,000. The bulk of this sum was given in Jaffa and a few other towns; Jerusalem's contribution of some £.P.15,000 was sent to Jaffa for urgent preparations in the earliest stages of the present disorders. The remainder of the collection was soon almost entirely expended on immediate defence requirements. As a result the Arab Higher Executive's office in Palestine is reported to be very near bankruptcy.

Arms.

(vi) The Executive's Jerusalem representatives have been supervising the distribution of small consignments of arms from the Levant States. Our correspondent describes as follows the manner in which different areas of the capital have been supplied. The Bab al Zahira (Herod's Gate) quarter of the Old City, the stronghold of the Ikhwan al Muslimin (Moslem Brotherhood), is almost fully provided; the Beit Abu Tor district, inhabited almost wholly by men from Hebron, who organised their own supply by purchasing rifles from Beit Sahur, near Bethlehem, with about £.P.1,000 which they had collected, is well armed. Baile Ghuri has promised 50 rifles to the Upper Bakaa quarter; some of his followers were observed receiving arms of an unknown type near his house on 5th January.

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(vii) Owners of mechanical transport businesses near the Jaffa Gate, Jerusalem, are reported to have refused recently to make further contributions to the Arab Higher Executive, on the grounds that, although they had given money when asked on two previous occasions, they had received no protection against the recent outrage in their vicinity (when some 15 Arabs were killed by a Jewish bomb and many wounded). In future they would provide their own protection, and nothing else. These men are described as mostly Hebronites, and are stated to have received backing in their stand from the notables of Hebron itself. The latter's Mayor is reported to have tried to persuade the Mufti during a recent visit to him at Cairo to approve a plan for an independent supply to Hebron of arms from Egypt. The Mufti replied that any purchase of weapons for Palestine should be made through the Arab National Treasury.

(viii) Two Iraqi officers are reported to have been in Palestine for some time, training young Arabs in the use of arms and in guerrilla fighting. Their presence is felt in addition to be intended as good advertisement for the Mufti's efforts.

(ix) It is stated that the Palestine Arab Medical Association, alarmed at the lack of response to its request for more funds from the Arab Higher Executive, has contemplated appealing to the International Red Cross Association. To avoid the slur this would represent Dr. Izzat Tannous (Secretary of the Beit al Nail) is reported to have determined himself to secure supplies at an early date from the Lebanon.

The Arab Legion.

(x) Meanwhile the Arab Legion is reported to have gained great popularity among the Arabs in Palestine for their practical help to the national cause. This has not pleased the supporters of the Mufti.

Support from the Arab League.

(xi) Reaction in Palestine to the result of the recent raid from Syria on two Jewish settlements in the North of Palestine is reported to be one of strong disappointment. If the much wanted help from the Arab States (four of which, not including Transjordan, are believed to have been represented among the attackers) is to take no more effective form than this, it is felt that Arab hopes for Palestine are unlikely ever to materialize. Up to the incident it had been expected that assistance from the neighbouring countries would guarantee an Arab victory in Palestine; now the public is stated to consider that its own fighting value is the greater of the two Arab elements in the struggle; this has lowered morale greatly. Finally, the efficiency of the Jewish defence against the raiders is regarded as of the best possible value for general Jewish propaganda.

The Arabs and the Powers.

(xii) Commenting on the recent sailing of two ships from Bulgaria with a large number of Jewish illegal immigrants bound for Palestine, source states that most Arabs regarded the passengers as an army despatched in civilian clothing to the Russians. It was felt not unlikely that a corresponding large shipment of arms would follow. Opinion towards the U.S.S.R. is on the whole unfavourable; so is Arab feeling towards the U.S.A. Feeling for Great Britain is improved.